

THE
Christian History;

Containing Accounts of the Propagation and Revival
of Religion in *Great Britain, America, &c.*

Saturday DECEMBER 1. 1744. § N^o. 92.

*A brief Account of the late Revival of Religion in
PLYMOUTH; the first settled Town in NEW-ENGLAND, about forty Miles distant from BOSTON, South Eastward; in a Letter from the Rev. Mr. Leonard, Pastor of the first Church to the Rev. Mr. Prince.*

Rev. Sir,

IT pleased GOD to cast my Lot (who am the least of all Saints) in the first Church and Town in the Country above twenty Years ago. Religion was then under a great Decay, most People seem'd to be taken up principally about the World and the Lusts of this Life ; tho' there appeared some serious Christians among us that had the Things of GOD at Heart, who greatly bewailed the Growth of *Impiety, Prophaneness, Sabbath-breaking, Gaming, Tavern-haunting, Intemperance*, and other Evils, which threatened to bear down all that is Good and Sacred before them. We were sensible of an awful Degeneracy, and kept Days of Fasting and Prayer Year after Year that GOD would pour out his SPIRIT upon us ; especially on the rising Generation. At these Times we invited the Ministers of the County to join with us, who readily gave their Assistance. The Authority of this Town endeavoured to put a Stop to the growing Intemperance, by clearing the Taverns at nine o'Clock in the Evening, and punishing loose and disorderly Persons that frequented them. But all the Methods used one Way and the other, proved of little Effect. Iniquity prevailed, and we were in Danger of losing the very Form of Godliness.

The Rev. Mr. *Whitefield* coming into the Land, and the News we presently had of his Preaching and Conversation at *Boston* and elsewhere, roused us a little, and we sent to him to come & preach to us. We expected him in *October* 1740, but we were disappointed.

In *March* following the Rev. Mr. *Tennent* came hither and preached eight Sermons to general Acceptance, which by the Blessing of **God** greatly awakened this People, and many have dated such religious Impressions from that Time, as we have Reason to believe issued in a real Conversion to **God**. After him, several Ministers of the County and others visited us, and preached with us; and we often spent whole Days in Prayer, Singing and Preaching, and had frequently three Exercises in them. I often preached three Times on the *Lord's Day* my self, and sometimes three or four Times in the *Week* besides. Altho' before this thro' bodily Indisposition, and Heaviness of Spirit, I was not able to carry on the usual stated Exercises, and my People had for some Years provided me an Assistant.

The Subjects chiefly insisted on were these following, viz. The *Sin and Apostacy* of Mankind in *Adam*; the *Blindness* of the *natural Man* in the *Things of God*; the *Enmity* of the *carnal Mind*; the *Evil of Sin*; the *Desert* of it, and the *utter Inability* of the *fallen Creature* to *relieve* itself: The *Sovereignty* of **God**; his *Righteousness, Holiness, Truth, Power, Eternity*, also his *Grace and Mercy* in **CHRIST JESUS**: The *Way of Redemption* by **CHRIST**; *Justification*, thro' his *imputed Righteousness*, received by *Faith*; this *Faith* the *Gift of God*, and a *living Principle* that *worketh by Love*; *legal and evangelical Repentance*; the *Nature and Necessity* of *Regeneration*; and that *without Holiness no Man can see God*. All Persons were put upon examining themselves, warned against trusting in *their own Righteousness*, and resting in the *Form of Godliness*, without the *Power, &c.* These Things, together with pathetical Invitations to Sinners to *come and embrace the LORD JESUS CHRIST* as offered in the *Gospel*; made a wonderful Impression on the Minds of all Sorts of People at the first. And *Men, Women and Children* were much awakened, and the outward Face of Thing began exceedingly to alter.

In *February* 1741,2, the Rev. Mr. *Croswell* came hither, and continued in the Town about a *Fortnight*, preaching sometimes in this, and sometimes in the other Parish. At this

this Time, I think, I may say as the Apostle does to the *Thessalonians*: *The Gospel came unto us, not in Word only, but also in Power, and in the HOLY GHOST, and in much Assurance & Confidence* †. And we received the Word not as the Word of Man, but as it is in Truth, the Word of God, which wrought effectually in them that believed. * Hundreds of Souls were at one Time in the Meeting-House, Saturday Feb. 13th. crying out in the utmost Concern, *What they should do to be saved!* And many others rejoicing in the Lord, in the sweet Sense of his redeeming Love and Grace in CHRIST JESUS, as they declared. This Day and at some other Times, Conversions were so open and publick that we seemed to see Souls dead in Trepanies and Sins, revive and stand up Monuments of divine Grace, (I don't mean that we had an Intuition of their Hearts and knew infallibly the State of their Souls which is God's Prerogative) but the Appearance of Conversion from one State to the other, and the Alteration in the Frame and Temper of their Minds, which they discovered in Words and Behaviour was admirable. This Day appeared to me in the Time of it, and hath done so ever since, a Day of great Grace, for which my Soul giveth thanks to GOD.

After this for some Months together you should scarcely see any Body at the Taverns, unless they were Strangers, Travellers, or some come their upon necessary Busines. The Children forsook their Plays in the Streets, and Persons of all Denominations, except a few, gave themselves to reading the Word of GOD, and other Books of Devotion, to Meditation, Prayer, Conference, and other religious Exercises, and refrain'd from their customary Likes. And many that lived at a Distance, (being acquainted with this Town in its former State coming hither) beheld us now with Admiration, saying, *Surely the Fear of GOD is in this Place.*

Furthermore, as this present Life is a State of Imperfection; so there were some Circumstances that attended this Work, which if they had not been, might have prevented some Prejudice and Offence against it.

A violent Opposition presently arose, and prevailed so far, that a Number of this Congregation went out from us into a distinct Society, and nine of the Brethren asked a Dismissal

† 1 Epist. 1. 5. * 2 Ch. 13.
R. 1. 2

from

from us to embody into a Church by themselves. *We readily granted their Request, and they have lately had a Minister set over them. My Prayer for Him and Them is, " That GOD would pour out his SPIRIT abundantly upon them, greatly enrich them with heavenly Blessings, and fill them with all the Fulness of GOD."*

As for the *Subjects* of this Work ; it hath been here as in other Places. Some that were a while under Awakenings at length got rid of them, and are now returned as the Dog to his Vomit. Some that we thought at first savingly changed, have since given Reason to fear that they deceived themselves as well as others. But the far greater Part of them that were added to the *Church* behave with such *Meekness, Humility, Sobriety* and other Christian Virtues ; that I must say of them as *David* did of the godly of his Day, *They are the Excellent of the Earth, in whom is my Delight.* But I would not be understood to confine my good Opinion to those only that have past under a remarkable Change within *three or four Years past.* No, I am perswaded there are a Number of truly godly Persons among us that experienced the *New-Birth* before these Days, and even before my Settlement in this Town, for whom I have an equal *Regard.* There is great *Cause of Gratitude to GOD* that in this Place in the Days of its greatest Degeneracy and Lukewarmness in Religion, GOD reserved to himself a Remnant piously disposed, and of the same Spirit of our *religious Ancestors*, who followed GOD into this waste and howling Wilderness, and were the *first Settlers of this Town and of this Land*, for whom my *Veneration* within these few Years is much increased. Oh that GOD would more and more revive that *Religion* which was the Glory of our Fathers ; a Religion which had the *Power* as well as *Form of Godliness*, consisting in *Righteousness and Peace, and Joy in the HOLY GHOST, and fruitful in every good Work.*

As to the present State of Religion, the Town is much reformed from what it was before these Days. But Christians are not so lively as they have been ; the convincing SPIRIT seems in a great Measure withdrawn ; Iniquity begins to grow more bold of late ; and I am afraid a Day of sore Declension is coming upon this Place. O that GOD would again visit this Vine which his rightHand hath planted, and hath hitherto preserved ! O that he would water it every Moment ! Nothing but a Stream of Grace from

that Fountain where all Fulness dwells, can maintain and carry on a Work of Reformation against the Devices of the Devil, the Snares of the World, and the Opposition of Mens Hearts.

I have not been Particular either in describing the *Work* with us, or in giving *Examples of Conversion*; which I should have done were it not that the *Work with us is the same in Substance, which is so often described in these Papers*. And the *Conversions with us* (those we think genuine) *agreeing with the Accounts from other Places*. But thus much I tho't necessary to say, least I should be guilty of criminal Silence, being called to Praise God for his wonderful Works and his Loving-kindness towards us. My Soul mourns in secret for them that oppose or make a Derision of the glorious Work begun in the Land.

As for my self, I desire for ever to adore the great JEHOVAH, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, for the Share he hath granted me, of his meer Mercy, in the Grace shed abroad by the HOLY SPIRIT, in these Days upon the Churches. I earnestly desire the Prayers of all Christians, that God would strengthen me in Soul and Body, and make me stedfast, unmoveable, and enable me to abound in the Work of the LORD. Of my self I am nothing but Weakness, Sin and Rebellion against God, but thro' free and undeserved Grace, the LORD JESUS is Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption to me. The LORD is my Strength and my Shield, my Heart trusted in him and I am helped; therefore my Heart greatly rejoiceth, and with my Song will I praise him.

I am so confirmed in it that this Work is of God, that in my most calm and sedate Seasons my Prayer is, not only that God would lead me and guide me in his Way, but enable me to endure all Manner of ill Usage in the World rather than give up this Cause, which I am fully perswaded is his, to whom be Glory and Praise for ever and ever. Amen.

From your Friend and Servant in the LORD,

Nathanael Leonard.

November 23. 1744.

Remarkable Passages, in the Life of Mr. Richard Rothwell, a famous Puritan Minister in Queen ELIZABETH'S Reign, extracted from Clark's Lives of eminent Men.

HIS Education was in the Schools and afterwards at Cambridge: in the one he attained an exact Knowledge of the Tongues, especially the Greek and Hebrew, and in the other of the Arts; so that he became a skilful Linguist, a subtle Disputant, a copious Orator, and of a deep insight into any Kind of Knowledge.

In this first Course of his Studies appeared presently to his Observers the Blooms of that Fame, to which afterwards he attain'd; for he had a prompt Wit, a quick Apprehension, a clear Understanding, a sound Judgment, a ready Speech, and a strong Memory: which were improved by diligent Study; in which he continued to his last without Weariness. I have heard many others say, what I must, that I never came to him but I went the learneder from him.

After many Years spent at the University, he betook himself to the Ministry, and was ordained *Presbyter* by Dr. Whitgift then Arch-Bishop of Canterbury.

But all these intellectual Habits were but as so many Weapons in the Hands of a Madman; for he remained some Years without any Change of Heart, or sensible Work of Grace upon his Soul; but preach'd learnedly and lived vainly.

At length God was pleased to reveal his Son in him; which, because it was famous, and he himself afterwards proved the Means of the Conversion of so many, I shall set down as I have heard him speak it.

He was playing at Bowles on a Saturday, with some *Papists* and vain Gentlemen, when there came into the Green one Mr. Midg'y, a grave and godly Minister, whose Praise is great in the Gospel, tho' inferiour to Mr. Rothwell in Parts and Learning. He took him aside, and told him what a Pity it was, that such a Man as he, should be a Companion of *Papists*, and that upon a Saturday, when he should be preparing for the Sabbath. Mr. Rothwell flighted his Words, and check'd his medling. The good old Man left him, went home, and prayed for him. Mr. Rothwell, when he was retir'd from that Company, could not rest: Mr. Midg'y's Word's struck so deep in his Thoughts. The next Day he went to hear Mr. Midg'y. After Sermon he came to him, thank'd him for his Reproof, and besought his Direction and

Prayer

Prayer ; for that he was in a miserable Condition of Nature. And under a *Spirit of Bondage* he lay for a Time, 'till afterwards, and by Mr. Midgley's Hands also, he received the *Spirit of Adoption* ; wherewith he was so Sealed, that he never lost his *Affurance* to his dying. Tho' he was a Man subject to many Temptations, the Devil assaulting him very much, yet God was mightily with him ; that, out of his own Experience, he was able to comfort many. Thus did the Lord, by Mr. Midgley's plain Teaching, put forth the Evidence of his *SPIRIT*, upon this *mighty and learned Rabbi*.

He now becomes another Man, forsakes all his wonted Courses and Companions, preaches in another Manner than formerly, opens the Depths of Satan and Deceitfulness of the Heart ; so that he was called the *rough Hewer*.

He had the *Power of God* that went with his Ministry, when he preached the *Law*, to make Men tremble, yea, sometimes to *cry out* in the Church.

The honourable the *Lady Bowes*, who was at the Expence of a *Thousand Pounds* per Annum, for the Maintenance of Preachers where there were none ; upon Mr. Dikes Representation of the State of the People in the North, [of *England*] destitute of a Minister, and recommending Mr. Rothwell, sent for him, and offer'd him the Employment. His Answer was,-- ' He would go, and if the People called him, he would accept of her Motion.' At his first Day's Labour, they all desir'd him. He returned to the Lady, and tol her, ' He would go.' She reply'd, ' She was afraid to send him, understanding they were of a fierce Disposition, and having never heard the *Gospel*, might deal unkindly with him.' He answer'd Madam, ' If I thought I shou'd not meet the Devil there, I wou'd never come there ; he and I have been at odds at other Places, I hope we shall not agree there'.

I was eight Years his Bed-fellow, and *Eye-witness* of the great Success of his Ministry *there* and *over all the Country*, where he was worthily called, *the Apostle of the North*.

At his first Entrance he had great Opposition, and sometimes was Way-laid to take away his Life. But he overcame all, by his Patience & Courage. And there were few Sermons but, it was believed, he gain'd some Souls, and within four Years had so many judicious & experimental Christians, that they came from *London, York, Richmond, Newcastle*, & many other Places to see the Order of his Congregation. And many lew'd Gentlemen came ten or twelve Miles to hear him, to carp and get somewhat to accuse him ; many of which God took hold on, & they returned some convinced & some converted. He dy'd 1627. A. 64.

*Extract of a Letter from the Reverend Mr. Shurtleff
of Portsmouth PISCATAQUA, to a Minister in Boston.*

Portsmouth, Novem. 23. 1744.

Rev. Sir,

I Was favour'd with your's the Post before last ; and as to Mr. Whitefield's Reception among us, of which you say you wou'd be gladly inform'd ; the Time will allow me only to give you this short Account of it at present.

He came hither from York on the 6th *Instant* in the *Afternoon*. Upon his crossing the Ferry Mr. Fitch, and I, with some others, met him, and congratulated him upon his late Arrival among us. A considerable Number being convened expecting to hear him, Mr. Fitch asked him, that *Evening*, to preach in his *Meeting House* ; who readily comply'd with his Request. He was to have preached the *next Morning* in ours, but was so much indispos'd as not to be able to do it, 'till the *Afternoon*. He preached both Times to a large, an attentive, and affected Audience. In the *Evening* after he preach'd with us, he had a Return of the Malady, he was visited with on his first landing at York ; which arose to that Degree as to give his Physicians and others some Apprehension of Danger. But (thro' Mercy) he is now in a great Measure recover'd, and was so well as to preach again *Yesterday*.

The *Prejudices* of most that set themselves against him before his Coming, seem to be in a great Measure *abated*, and in some to be wholly *remov'd* ; and there is no open Opposition made to him. --- I have frequent Opportunities of being with him, and there always appears in him such a *Concern* for the Advancement of the *REDEEMER's Kingdom*, and the good of Souls ; such a *Care* to employ his whole Time to these Purposes ; such a *Sweetness* of Disposition, and so much of the *Temper* of his great *LORD* and *MASTER* ; that every Time I see him, I find my Heart further drawn out towards him. I hope in *GOD* that his Labours will be bless'd here, and with you ; and that wherefover he shall call him, a great *Door* and an *effetual* will be open'd to him.

Your affectionate Friend,

William Shurtleff.